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Records from Gdańsk and Kwidzyn districts and the Chief
Administrative Committee of the Province of West Prussia
concerning the dissolution of monasteries carried out
in the first half of the 19th century

Summary

The current paper presents the documentation concerning the monastery dissolution executed by the Prussian authorities in the first half of the 19th century in the territory of the contemporary Province of West Prussia (*Provinz Westpreußen*). The basic dissolution documentation was kept by the administrative district offices in Kwidzyn and Gdańsk (*Regierung Marienwerder*, *Regierung Danzig*). More general data was stored in the office of the Chief Administrative Committee of the Province of West Prussia at Gdańsk (later Province of Prussia), while the most general information was collected by the Ministry of Religious, Educational and Medical Affairs in Berlin (*Ministerium der Geistlichen, Unterrichts- und Medicinalangelegenheiten*), later Ministry of Religious Affairs (*Kultusministerium*). The material documenting the dissolution encompasses general records (*acta generalia*), which include directives and instructions for the enforcement of the suppression, as well as detailed records (*acta specialia*), which present the process of dissolution of particular monasteries. The documentation of monastery dissolutions offers extremely valuable data since it does not describe only the dissolution process itself, but also comprises records from the period following the formal suppression of monasteries, presenting – among other issues – the subsequent fates of their buildings and churches.

The most extensive documentation was produced in administrative district offices. It comprises not only regular correspondence between officials responsible for the preparation and execution of the dissolution of a given monastery, but also original suppression reports, inventories of property, church furnishings and equipment, and sometimes library catalogues. The state of preservation of dissolution records concerning particular monasteries varies, and not infrequently the only extant sources are the cardboard-bound archival units stored in the records of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, held at Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz in Berlin. Hence, full information on the originally produced dissolution documentation at particular administrative levels can only be provided by old inventories of the mentioned in the article fonds. Drawing on the information they contain and on present inventories helped to compile data concerning the archival units created as a result of that. In this way, it was possible to reconstruct a register of records documenting the dissolution process in the first half of the 19th century in the territory of the contemporary Province of West Prussia, taking into account also the sources that have been lost.